

2019

Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership



CHILD CARE
State Capacity Building Center

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The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 articulates a systems approach for the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, with states working on access, quality, and supply of child care within newly articulated requirements that apply across all participating states and territories. Innovation and opportunity are key to the thinking and action required to make the best use of the federal law. The 2014 Act emphasizes the need for action with partners, which requires systems leadership capacities for all-embracing, aligned action with partners. The cross-cutting nature of implementing reauthorization asks CCDF leaders to achieve results by coordinating resources and policies within and beyond their immediate control. Critical provisions of the new law cannot be achieved by one agency or program alone. Full implementation will be realized only through strong leadership, intentional sharing of leadership, and coordinating and collaborating with key stakeholders and partners. Changing mindsets and sharing leadership are key to successfully ushering in these sweeping statutory changes. They are also leadership interventions.

Technical Assistance in Systems Building for State Leaders

Technical assistance to support systems building, including strategic planning, is available through the State Capacity Building Center and may be available through other federal technical assistance centers. Please check with your State Systems Specialist for more information.

As leaders, one of the best ways to intervene and bring about change is to deepen our learning about ourselves—to improve our understanding of our actions, behaviors, decision-making processes, conversations, questions, and choices. To help us with this type of learning, we can turn to the latest in neuroscience, which has discovered new insights into the key drivers of adult learning and behavior. The biggest influencer of our actions and behavior is a complex dance between our brain, body, and nervous system. The field of neuroscience has had significant breakthroughs in understanding the origins of our behavior by looking deep into our brains with advanced neurotechnology. These new insights into our brain are now being applied in the real world through an interdisciplinary approach by neuroscientists and experts in leadership practice and change management. “Leadership,” chapter 1 of Systems Building Resource Guide, shares cutting edge, brain-based models for improving both our individual and systems leadership practices as well as approaches for leading change.

First Things First—We Must Lead Ourselves

With the CCDF reauthorization, we are in a period of transition. The old rules are on the way out, and the new rules are being implemented. As leaders, we too are in transition. Some of our leadership practices are less of a fit as we pivot to meet the new requirements. In response to these new CCDF requirements, we must change more than the systems we are leading; we must change ourselves as leadership practitioners. A useful approach to establishing change in ourselves is to see ourselves as the interventions or the instruments of leadership. The idea that the instrument of leadership is the self¹ comes from Jim Kouzes, a leadership scholar and experienced executive. This concept expands with the notion that engineers have their computers, and painters have their brushes and canvases; but leaders—we have ourselves. Because the instrument of leadership is the self, mastering the art of leadership comes from the mastery of self or, as Peter Senge has coined it, “personal mastery.”² This makes leadership deeply personal. It also makes leadership about self-development. The good news is that we, as humans, are biologically wired to learn; we simply can’t stop ourselves from doing it. What matters most in the learning process is the intention we put behind it. Senge outlines this intention as the “discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision of what’s important to us, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality as objectively as possible.”³ To use ourselves as instruments to lead, we need to understand that before we can become experts, we must learn, practice, and perform. Being an instrument of change doesn’t happen overnight. We don’t move forward to immediate success. It requires introspection and learning.

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In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge refers to this notion as “metanoia,” which means shifting our minds so that we can meet the new leadership requirements of today. This type of learning is not about consuming information, following courses, reading books, or attending conferences. The type of learning he is referring to is our willingness and ability to shift our minds. This means we are willing and able to do the following:

- **Change ourselves:** to learn is to change oneself, to change one’s mind and behavior, and to recreate ourselves for new work.
- **Acquire new skills:** through learning, we should be able to do something we were not able to do before.
- **See differently:** through this learning process and shifting, we perceive the world differently.
- **Become more creative:** most importantly, through learning, we extend our ability to create in new and innovative ways.

Now, the act of leading the self and others is more about our own behavior.⁴ The 20th century gave us a broad and diverse range of psychological and social research—mainly created through observation and analysis—that has informed our understanding of human behavior. However, in the 21st century, the fields of neuroscience and neurotechnology have made revolutionary discoveries about the origins of behavior deep inside the brain and nervous system. We now have a far more sophisticated understanding of what really drives behavior. Dr. David Rock of the Neuroleadership Institute has woven hundreds of studies into models, one known as SCARF and the other as SEEDS, discussed below. These studies, particularly within the field of social, cognitive, and affective neuroscience, give us insight into the true drivers of human social behavior underlying the human brain.⁵ Leadership and adult learning experts are beginning to apply these insights in the real world. We want to share such insights with the early childhood field because they have important implications for our leadership practice as we work to improve system coherence, integration, and how we advance equity in our early childhood systems.

Using ourselves intentionally relies in large part on our level of awareness about the impact we make and our ability to make choices to direct and modify that impact. Neuroscience is telling us that consciously, and often unconsciously, when we interact with someone, we’re meeting some of their social needs and perhaps also depriving them of others. That is, we’re using language and engaging in behavior that either uplifts and motivates people or causes them to withdraw or shut down. Developing a deeper awareness of self is the key to understanding our impact. We can do this by developing our mind to be aware of the self, others, situations, and patterns so that we can use ourselves as an instrument of change. Intentionally deepening our self-awareness and self-management becomes the first part of shifting our minds.

In *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman lists self-awareness and self-management as the first two dimensions of what he has termed emotional intelligence. True self-awareness requires reflective self-examination, feedback from others, and knowledge of who we are (including the neurobiological perspective of our brains), where we are going, and why we are going there. Self-awareness is not something that is intrinsic; we develop it over time, often with the help of others guiding the self-discovery process. Two cutting-edge, brain-based models were developed by David Rock in the last 10 years to help us improve our knowledge of who we are. We can do this by understanding the perspective of our brain and how that can enhance our abilities to leverage leadership interactions in new and effective ways. The science supporting these models comes from over 150 neuroscientific studies. Rock has woven these studies into several models, summarizing the findings into frameworks—or conceptual containers—to help us see the discoveries more clearly, to receive them more deeply, and to assimilate the material more quickly. He shares this powerful material in this design format because, as it turns out, our brains love to learn with conceptual containers.

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Use the SCARF Model to Understand Our Individual Triggers

Using SCARF to Collaborate with and Influence Others⁶

We've known for a long time that our assumptions, emotions, world views, and paradigms influence our behavior. The latest research in neuroscience tells us that our neurobiology is what drives our behavior and defines how we, as leaders, make meaning, solve problems, and carry out tasks with others. Core neurobiological human processes play out every day in our actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations.⁷ Understanding our own neurobiology—how we are wired and the deeply social nature of the brain—can help us own the dynamics within us and modernize how we respond to the contemporary complexities of our field.⁸

Any of us who have had some success leading have had an analytic mindset about ourselves and situations. We have tried to understand what is going on inside of us—how we are changing over time and how we interact with others. To help leaders continue to gain clarity about themselves—Rock developed SCARF to illuminate two key biological foundations that underpin how humans relate to each other and themselves. In Rock's own words, these key foundations are as follows:

- Much of our motivation driving social behavior is governed by an overarching organizing principle of minimizing threat and maximizing reward.
- Social needs are treated in the brain in much of the same way as our need for food and water.⁹

How these key foundations play out in our brain is in the approach-avoid response. A basic function of our brain is to distinguish when to approach or avoid something. This response has developed as an evolutionary response and has largely helped us—humans—stay alive. We are intrinsically motivated to move away from perceived threats and toward perceived rewards. Any positive emotion or reward generally creates action, whereas a negative emotion or punishment causes a threat stimulus—or activated networks—in our brain, which leads to avoidance.

The premise of the SCARF model is that the brain—as constructed over time—makes us behave in certain ways, which are to minimize threats and maximize rewards. Additionally, the drivers in the brain that take the threat and reward approach do so as if they were a primary need, such as food and water. Neuroscience research findings are helping us see in very tangible ways (for example, by using functional MRIs) that our social needs are on par with our need for food and water. This new science has big implications for the workplace—a highly social situation. In our interactions, our brain is busy classifying everything with a “reward” or “threat” feeling in our body, which then registers in our behavior. Our brains want to know, is something good for us or bad for us?

The SCARF model summarizes these two themes within a framework that captures the common factors that can activate a reward or threat response in social situations. You can apply and test this model in any situation in which people collaborate as part of a group. The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness.

- Status is about where you are in relation to others around you.
- Certainty concerns being able to predict the future.
- Autonomy provides a sense of control over events.
- Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe.
- Fairness is a perception of impartial and just exchanges between people.

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Table 1. Reward and Threat Responses in the SCARF Model

Five Domains of Human Social Experience (Drivers of Our Behavior)	How We Activate the Reward State in Others	Results of Reward State	How We Activate a Threat State in Others	Consequences of Threat State
Status: sense of our personal worth—where we are in relation to other people	Positive feedback, public acknowledgment, allow staff to provide feedback to themselves in performance reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More cognitive resources available to us More insights More ideas for action Fewer perceptual errors A wider field of view—more open 	Critique, unsolicited advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Released stressor hormones Reduced resources for our brain—less oxygen and glucose available for brain function Decreased cognition Reduced working memory, which impacts linear, conscious processing Inhibits the brain from perceiving the subtler signals required for solving nonlinear problems involved in the insight or “aha!” experience We generalize more easily, which increases the likelihood of erring on the safe side and shrinking from opportunities, as we perceive them to be more dangerous Increased defensive reactions in interactions Small stressors are more likely to be perceived as large stressors Reduces our range and field of view Err on the side of pessimism
Certainty: sense of what the future holds for us	Clear expectations, setting clear goals, realistic project schedules		Lack of transparency, dishonesty, unpredictability	
Autonomy: sense of control over our lives	Providing choices, delegation, self-responsibility, empowerment		Micromanagement, constant authoritative leadership	
Relatedness: sense of safety with others	Friendly gestures, foster socializing, mentoring programs		Fostering internal competition, prohibiting socializing in the workplace	
Fairness: sense of what is impartial and just	Transparent decisions, open communication, candidness, clear rules		Unequal treatment, unclear rules and guidelines, lack of communication	

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The idea is to use this model to design interactions to minimize threats and maximize rewards in each of these five domains. In a second step, the objective is to activate reward response to motivate people more effectively using internal rewards. When the brain and body register a social threat in these dimensions, they light up the networks of the brain that register the threat of physical pain, a finding that has substantial implications for leadership practices. The SCARF model improves people's capacity to understand and ultimately modify their own and other people's behavior in social situations like the workplace, allowing them to be more adaptive. This model is especially relevant for CCDF leaders and managers or anyone looking to influence others. The more we understand about the workings of our brain and body responses, the more we understand what is happening to us moment-to-moment, whether that is why we can't think straight after a long day or what's going on with a relationship in our life. We've got a new language for what's happening. This adds to feelings of certainty and control. Thus, we can make different choices that we might not otherwise explore. To better understand which of the five SCARF domains are key drivers for you, there is a free online self assessment that will give you insight into the importance each domain currently has in your life. Please see the Resources section of this guide for the self assessment.

Use the SEEDS Model to Understand and Manage Our Biases¹⁰

If You Have a Brain, You're Biased

Nobody makes decisions in a vacuum. Our brains are constantly taking mental shortcuts—for better or worse—to help us choose between options. These shortcuts are known as biases. In biological terms, bias is a typical part of being human. Biases help us get through the day without having to gather every bit of information for every decision we have to make, such as where to turn on the road to get home from work. The more expert we are at something, the more we can rely on our biases.

Because our brains are constantly taking mental shortcuts, and because these biases are mostly invisible to us, we need to be concerned with how they individually and institutionally influence decisions and choices we make in our early childhood systems. Experts on the study of race and ethnicity use the term implicit bias to describe the beliefs and societal messages we carry without awareness or conscious direction which are interwoven with our evolutionary biases. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity defines implicit bias as follows:

- The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. This can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible.¹¹

These biases can work toward our benefit (for example, survival, ease of life), and they can create harmful effects (for example, creating inequities and stopping us from considering a range of options) from our behavior and choices. It's not humanly possible to be aware of our unconscious brain activity in the moments that we are making choices or decisions. It is up to us as leaders to rethink our organizational processes that guide decision-making so that we can begin to mitigate our invisible biases. That way, we create a more equitable early childhood system.

Promote Equity

Promoting equity can help eliminate disparities that negatively affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to participating in quality early learning experiences. Creating equitable learning opportunities for young children is at the core of how we lead in our field in the 21st century. These opportunities help children thrive by recognizing and building on each child's unique set of individual and family strengths, cultural background, home language, abilities, and experiences.¹² Recent figures show that 45 percent of all young children from birth to age four in the United States are children of color, and the diversity of young children continues to grow. One in five young children today is learning a home language and English simultaneously. Designing an early childhood system that is responsive to the needs of all children is key to both these children's future and the nation's future.¹ However, we know that we have a lot of gaps in our systems (for example, cultural awareness gaps, access gaps, participation gaps, workforce diversity gaps). Closing all of these gaps requires explicit planning,

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including using the SEEDS Model to mitigate bias in decision-making processes. Doing so requires constructing decision-making processes that include individuals who have different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds to contribute their expertise to this learning. This may even mean adapting decision-making approaches to recognize that different cultures approach decision-making differently—in terms of consensual versus majority rule, time allotments for discussion and planning, and ways of establishing trust and a sense of shared experience across groups. Both process and product are important in both developing early childhood systems that respond to the diversity of the young child population and addressing structural inequities.¹⁴

What's Happening in Our Brain Unconsciously?

From a neuroscience point of view, our brains make sense of the world by categorizing things. Additionally, our brains create stronger associations towards certain things than others. For example, similarity bias makes us think that “people like me are better than others,” and distance bias has people believing that “closer things are better than ones that are distant.”¹⁶ Scientists have identified over 150 different types of biases—many that are unconscious. The challenge with our brains is that we can't just take an unconscious thing and make

it conscious. It's not possible to be aware of unconscious processes in the moments that we make choices or decisions. It's a different way of processing things in your brain. People have known about these kinds of unconscious biases for a long time, and awareness of them hasn't led to better decision-making. Awareness and education only go so far, but awareness can help you understand the ways you've been biased in the past and the ways that you might be again in the future.

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The challenging news from the science is that even well-intentioned individuals have biases that can impact their perceptions and behavior—producing discriminatory behavior. The good news from the science is that individuals, once educated on the science of implicit bias, can develop strategies and processes to intentionally impact those biases.

—Cheryl Staats et al., *The State of Science: Implicit Bias Review*¹⁵

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Knowing about Bias Isn't Enough

Cognitive neuroscience has shown that knowing we have a bias isn't enough. While raising awareness can help us realize that we might be biased, it does not enable us to recognize bias in our own thinking—we simply do not have conscious access to the inner workings of bias in the brain. We can't entirely get rid of these biases, but we can mitigate the impact they have

on the choices we make. We can do this by preparing, in advance, for decisions where a bias might come into play. For example, in decisions about choosing who to promote to a management role, we know that similarity bias—that people similar to us are better—comes into play. By looking at commonalities and how we're similar to each candidate, we can mitigate that unconscious bias. The trick is that we must do this ahead of the decision, which means knowing what types of decisions might

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Neuroscience does not provide an excuse to continue to have and act on our biases. Instead, it reveals those biases and removes our ability to deny the biological tendencies of our unconscious mind.

—Cheryl Staats et al., *The State of Science: Implicit Bias Review*¹⁷

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invoke unconscious biases. Changing the context surrounding the decision and preparing ahead of time for challenging decisions are critical. The most effective strategy for mitigating bias is focusing on changing processes, not just making individuals aware of biases.

To tackle the effects of unconscious bias, we really have to have a systems approach—we need to look at the whole decision-making process used by our teams, organizations, and systems. We can set up systems and processes for gathering all the information we need, and we can ensure certain steps are followed in our processes before making a decision. Individuals and teams can certainly work to mitigate bias, but the impact is much greater if an entire division, organization, or system is on board.

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Breaking Bias: The SEEDS Model

The SEEDS model proposes an alternative solution to mitigating bias, derived from a brain-based perspective. The SEEDS model identifies processes that can interrupt and redirect unconsciously biased thinking. Practice with this model can help guide your use of such processes. The SEEDS model simplifies the roughly 150 identified cognitive biases and recognizes five categories of bias, each of which responds to a different set of actions that will help mitigate the bias. Use the SEEDS model by following three steps, excerpted below:

1. Accept that we are biased by virtue of our biology. People and systems are deeply biased and don't know it.
2. Label the types of bias that are likely to occur in any system or might influence a particular decision, using the SEEDS model.
3. Mitigate bias by using strategies that go directly to the core processes underpinning the bias.¹⁸

Table 2. SEEDS Model

Five Categories of Bias	What It Looks Like	How to Mitigate the Bias
Similarity: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ People like me are better▪ “The mirror”▪ In-group and out-group bias	Involves more positively evaluating people who are similar to us or who share similar goals; perceiving people who are different from us more negatively; common in decisions about people	Find ways to acknowledge the similarities that exist between you and others; remove identifying and potentially biasing information from materials that go into the decision-making process
Expedience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ If it feels familiar and easy it must be true▪ “The time machine”▪ Confirmation bias	Can occur in everyday decisions that involve complex calculations, analysis, evaluation, or identifying conclusions out of data	Slow down the process, mentally stop, and involve others in the decision
Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ My perceptions are accurate▪ “The know-it-all”▪ False consensus effect	Can occur anytime we fail to see that things may not be the way they seem and in any situation in which we fail to appreciate other people's perspectives	Seek objective outside opinions from those not involved in the project or team; revisit ideas after a break, look at yourself and your message through other people's eyes
Distance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Closer is better than distant▪ “The family circle”	Involves focusing on short-term (here and now) thinking rather than long-term investment	Take distance out of the equation; evaluate the outcomes or resources as if they were equally close to you in distance, time, or ownership
Safety: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bad is stronger than good▪ “The protector”▪ Loss aversion	Can occur any time we make decisions about the probability of risk or return	Imagine you are making the decision for someone else

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Why Is It So Hard to Accept That Our Actions, Behaviors, and Decisions Are Influenced by Bias?

Resistance to our own susceptibility to bias, paired with the unconscious nature of cognitive bias, creates a perfect storm in which bias is perpetuated and rarely recognized or adequately managed. So, why is it so hard to do this? In part, this is because it feels good to be right, and it feels bad to be wrong. Being right activates the brain's reward circuitry.¹⁹ From our brain's perspective, being correct is associated with contentment and certainty. Being wrong activates the regions of the brain that are associated with processing pain and negative emotion (even when there are no material consequences of being wrong).²⁰

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Change Management

Change management may be a strategic initiative that is planned from within—an internal change—or something imposed externally, such as changes in leadership, organizational structure, regulations, or a changing political or fiscal environment. Two examples follow: one focuses on the need for change management due to external factors and the other shows how change management may be needed due to internal decisions.

Example: Externally Driven Change

For the field of early childhood, change is afoot at the national level, which is commanding change at the state and local levels. The Administration for Children and Families' (ACF) Office of Child Care, Office of Head Start, and Maternal Child Health Bureau have been collaborating and asking states, territories, and tribes to envision and implement a cross-sector approach to create a more seamless support system for children and families across the nation. Aligning with ACF's vision, the [Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014](#) was signed into law. Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Fund program for the first time since 1996, and it represents a historic reenvisioning of the purposes for the program. The new law, with its changed purpose, adds to a cultural shift within the early childhood field. It asks states to rethink child care in innovative ways—to change mindsets and stimulate new levels of action so that the law intentionally supports parents' ability to work and offers care that promotes children's development. As CCDF Administrators work to fully implement the new requirements of CCDF, their success depends on leading change with others.

Example: Internally Driven Change

States are moving beyond the traditional minimum licensing standards—a monitoring structure—to create and support the design and implementation of a quality-based approach. This approach blends standards with supports and processes for quality improvement that focus on child development and school readiness. To make this shift, states have been designing and developing quality rating and improvement systems that align minimum licensing standards; create new standards for quality; provide financial, technical, and professional resources; integrate outreach and communications; and include a rating and monitoring approach to support ongoing quality improvement. This internal shift that is occurring in so many states requires CCDF Administrators to reboot the culture in early childhood and lead change with many other partners and stakeholders.

Key Strategies for Leading Change

Five key strategies are noted to support sound leadership during a period of intentional change:

- 1. Lead the change you want to see:** Change management is an approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations to a desired future state. While change—for individuals, teams, and organizations—may feel constant, leading and managing with clear and frequent communication of the vision (in other words, the desired change) enhances the opportunity for success.
- 2. Understand (and implement) the key strategies of leading change:** John Kotter's influential book, *Leading Change*, identifies these key, practical strategies to support change, excerpted below:
 - Create a sense of urgency
 - Assemble a guiding coalition for external change or a guiding team for internal change
 - Identify a vision
 - Communicate the vision (cultivate ownership, commitment, and buy-in)
 - Empower action toward the vision (remove obstacles)
 - Generate short-term wins (focus on low-hanging fruit)

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- Consolidate gains and build on successful change
 - Institutionalize the change (make it “stick”)²¹
3. **Know the stages of change:** Individuals, as well as organizations, pass through multiple stages as they go through the cycle of change. Each of the following stages can be matched with appropriate strategies to promote and support how changes are viewed, implemented, and sustained. William Bridges, in his book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, identifies three stages of change, applicable to both individuals and organizations. These stages, in Bridges own words, are listed below:
- Change begins with an end: what is being lost or grieved in the process?
 - Mid-phase transition: characterized by chaos, confusion, and false starts.
 - Finish with a new beginning: well-defined vision and progress.²²
4. **Understand how individuals respond to change and innovation:** Diffusion of innovations is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and ways of being, as well as technology, spread through cultures. Everett Rogers, a professor of communication studies, popularized the theory in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*; the book was first published in 1962 and is now in its fifth edition (2003). Rogers argues that diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the participants in a social system. The origins of the diffusion of innovations theory are varied and span multiple disciplines. Rogers proposes that four main elements influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and a social system.

This process relies heavily on human capital. The innovation must be widely adopted to self-sustain. Within the rate of adoption, there is a point at which an innovation reaches critical mass. Diffusion manifests itself in different ways in various cultures and fields and is highly subject to how people adopt the innovation and innovation-decision process. How people adopt these processes depends on how they respond to innovation, change, crisis, and opportunity, so thinking about the people involved can help leaders during a time of change. Rogers's *Diffusion of Innovations* categorizes the different responses as follows:

- Innovators: These are people who are the most willing to take risks and are the first to adopt new ideas.
- Early adopters: These individuals adopt new ideas and innovations easily but generally use more discretion than innovators when making choices. Early adopters are thought to have a high degree of “opinion leadership,” which means that they are especially educated about certain subjects and are therefore capable of influencing others. Opinion leaders, acting as change agents, can bring new ideas and innovations to communities and organizations. As a collaborative leader, the CCDF Administrator should search out early childhood opinion leaders who are considered influential in the community and among their peers to act as champions for early childhood systems building efforts.
- Early majority: They adopt an innovation after a varying degree of time that is significantly longer than the innovators and early adopters. Early majorities have above average social status, contact with early adopters, and seldom hold positions of opinion leadership in a system.
- Late majority: They adopt an innovation after the average participant. These individuals approach an innovation with a high degree of skepticism and after the majority of society has adopted the innovation. Late majorities are typically skeptical about an innovation, have below average social status, have little financial liquidity, are in contact with others in late majority and early majority, and have little opinion leadership.
- Laggards: They are the last to adopt an innovation. They tend to focus on tradition and typically avoid change. Unlike some of the previous categories, individuals in this category show little-to-no opinion leadership. These individuals typically have an aversion to change agents. Laggards typically tend to be focused on traditions, are among the lowest social status, have the lowest financial liquidity, are the oldest among adopters, and are in contact with only family and close friends.²³

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5. **Understand why people sometimes resist change:** Organizational change can cause stress for those affected by the change, and resistance to change can manifest itself through rebellion and avoidance. Failure to understand and validate emotions associated with change can hamper efforts to lead and implement changes successfully. Common reasons people resist change include the following:
- Risk (threat to security and what is known)
 - Loss (perceived or real loss of control, power, rewards, esteem, competence, or relationships)
 - Lack of clarity (which can be especially painful in the ambiguity of the mid-phase)
 - Lack of participation
 - Demand for new behaviors
 - Negative memories of change

Avoiding Resistance to Change and Innovation

There are several classic strategies for dealing with resistance to change, based on the fundamental research conducted by John Kotter and Leonard Schlesinger.²⁴ Nine key strategies are provided below. Consider incorporating these as part of your overall change management strategy.

1. **Address personal concerns:** Most organizations justify the need for change by telling staff about all of the wonderful things the change will mean for the organization. This is a weak approach to gaining audience buy-in. When faced with a change, people react first with their own concerns: “What’s in it for me?” “Does this mean I’ll have a different role?” “Will this break up our department?” So, first things first. Deal with personal concerns first, before organizational benefits.
2. **Link the change to issues people care about:** Increase the perceived need for a change by linking it to other issues that people already care about. For example, by showing how a change is connected to bigger-picture issues in early childhood (for example, research, return on investment) as well as sustainability, job security, and other things that are already in the front of people’s minds, you can increase the “stickiness” for change.
3. **Tap into the desire to avoid loss:** People are more attuned to loss than to gain. Our brains are wired for this. “Negativity bias” is a longstanding survival trait that has kept humans alive throughout their development as a species. Historically, it was always more important to avoid stepping on a snake than to find a soft place to sleep. Humans may have advanced in many ways, but something scary still gets and holds attention more quickly and longer than something pleasant. Therefore, rather than just telling people what they stand to gain from a change, you may have a greater impact by telling them what they stand to lose if they don’t accept the change.
4. **Cater to people’s expectations:** People generally hold firm views of how the world works. These “mental models” govern much of people’s thinking, including how they perceive a potential change. For example, they may tend to see a change as something good about to happen and willingly accept it. On the other hand, they may see a change as something bad about to happen and focus their energy on avoiding loss. You can provide all the logical arguments in the world in support of change, but if your arguments don’t match the basic assumptions and rules with the way the person sees the world, you aren’t likely to get far. Additionally, people hold fast to their current beliefs, desires, or feelings; this means that if the change you are promoting doesn’t appeal to their current beliefs, desires, or feelings, you may have a hard time making any headway.
5. **Take advantage of natural biases:** People tend to see things that are happening now as more urgent than those that will happen in the future. This tendency is often referred to as “discounting the future.” For instance, when presented with the option of getting \$500 now or \$750 in a year (a 50 percent rate of interest), the average person will choose the \$500 now. This suggests that when we’re trying to persuade others that a change is necessary, even though the future threat and loss may be great, we should emphasize that inaction now poses its own threat and loss. Also, you may have an easier time getting people

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to agree on a solution now if they can postpone implementation until sometime in the future. People tend to believe that they will be in a better position to change in the future; they expect to have more time, more money, and fewer demands than they do now. While experience does not support this belief, it provides people with the motivation to act in the present toward a future goal.

6. **State the change in concrete terms:** Often organizational changes are responses to some sort of threat. If that threat is seen as more relevant to others outside the organization than to the employees, or if the threat is presented in the abstract, then employees will have little motivation to change. However, if you can demonstrate in concrete terms that the threat is local and will have a real impact on them, you may find it easier to persuade people to buy in. For instance, when people think about the threat of pollution, many think of it as a threat to other people in other places. In a situation like this, getting people to adopt inconvenient changes, such as recycling, is difficult. On the other hand, if you can show them with concrete examples exactly how recycling will positively impact them in their local community, then they are more likely to adopt the necessary changes.
7. **Appeal to the entire brain:** Often, when making the case for a change, leaders use a lot of numbers, charts, tables, and so on. Such facts and figures appeal especially to one side of the brain. But the human brain has two sides, and although they work together, each has a different way of processing information. The left side is analytical and controls how we process quantitative information. The right side is experiential and controls how we process emotional information. Even for people whose brains favor one side (for example, engineers who favor facts and figures), the most effective communication targets both sides of the brain. To appeal to both sides of the brain, you might consider the following:
 - Combining analytic information with vivid imagery in the form of film footage, metaphors, personal accounts, real world analogies, and concrete comparisons
 - Employing messages designed to highlight relevant personal experience and create an emotional response
8. **Beware change saturation:** While connecting with people's emotional side, you should not overload them with too much change. People can attend to only a limited number of things, much like a sponge can absorb only so much water. At first, the sponge has no problem. However, at some point, the sponge becomes full, and any additional water simply runs off. The finite pool of worry is full. This has implications for leaders. Often, people's lives are already filled with change. When you ask them to worry about more things, you may unintentionally introduce "emotional numbing," a state in which people fail to respond to anything except threats that are immediate. So, beware overusing emotional appeals, particularly those relying on fear.
9. **Know your change:** Not all changes are equal. Some are more beneficial, and some cause more inconvenience and pain. Change agents must know how their change stacks up against six change characteristics:
 - Simple: is your change complex, or is it relatively simple to understand and do?
 - Compatible: is your change compatible with what your people are used to?
 - Better: does your change offer clear advantages over other alternatives, including the status quo?
 - Adaptable: can people adapt your change to their own circumstances, or must they do it exactly the way you prescribe?
 - Painful: does your change alter social relationships in any way by changing where people work, who they deal with, or how they spend their time?
 - Divisible: can you break the change you offer into smaller parts or phases, or must audiences implement it all at one time?

When evaluating your change against these characteristics, note that any change can have both positive and negative aspects in the same characteristic. For instance, a change might be relatively advantageous in one way and be relatively disadvantageous in another. Also, as you evaluate these characteristics, do so from multiple perspectives. You need to understand the change from the point of view of those who will feel it most acutely so that you can lead and manage to the greatest success.

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Teams and Change

To manage change, whether it is internal to your organization—such as a new Secretary of the agency with a new vision—or change that includes external partners—such as CCDF reauthorization or a new plan from a statewide coalition—you’ll need skills in developing, implementing, and sustaining a team or coalition to reach the desired outcome. Groups change as team or coalition members come and go; however, teams and coalitions will most likely move through various stages of development throughout their time together.

The following model, known as the Tuckman Model, is one that can be used to address stages of internal team or cross-sector coalition development. Bruce Tuckman reviewed more than 50 studies of group development in the mid-1960s and synthesized their commonalities in one of the most frequently cited models of group development.²⁵ The model describes four linear stages (forming, storming, norming, and performing) that a group will go through in its unitary sequence of decision-making. A fifth stage—adjourning—was added in 1977 when a new set of studies was reviewed.²⁶

Tuckman Model of Group Development

Forming Group Development Stage

Group members learn about each other and the task at hand. Indicators of this stage might include unclear objectives, noninvolvement, uncommitted members, confusion, low morale, hidden feelings, or poor listening.

Working with Internal Teams Examples	Working with Guiding Coalitions Examples
Staff within your agency may have experienced change within government many times due to the episodic nature of new administrations. Even though team members may have worked together over time, when change occurs, often teams can take steps backwards into the forming stage. Know that what the team needs most is clarity about where they are headed and how that differs from where they are now.	The field of early childhood is interdisciplinary at its core. It has a focus on the whole child and includes goals that promote comprehensive services for children and families. Leading and participating in cross-sector partnerships are part of doing business. However, the partners who need to be involved constantly shift due to contextual influences and change. With new coalitions just launching or new (powerful) partners joining an existing cross-sector table, coalitions begin at a stage of “forming”—becoming grounded in the who, what, why, where, when, and how of the group and the problem that they are solving.

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Storming Group Development Stage

As group members continue to work, they will engage each other in arguments about the structure of the group, which often are significantly emotional and illustrate a struggle for status in the group. These activities mark the storming phase: lack of cohesion, subjectivity, hidden agendas, conflicts, confrontation, volatility, resentment, anger, inconsistency, or failure.

Working with Internal Teams Examples	Working with Guiding Coalitions Examples
In times of change, team members can be opportunistic, pessimistic, or devoid of enthusiasm—positive or negative—toward the new direction. As teams work through their individual biases and struggle to come together collectively, meetings can feel combative and lack cohesion. The important thing here is to allow the team to be in this phase of storming long enough to begin to coalesce, developing common ground for the new direction. However, don't allow the team to overstay in the storming phase. You want progress; move through the storm process. You don't want them to stay and build a camp in the storm.	Building an early childhood system requires the work of many. Coalitions form to solve problems. One of the first action steps a coalition can take is to define the problem they want to solve and secure agreement on their focus. This doesn't come easily. There may be hidden agendas, historical conflict patterns, or inconsistent leadership. The storming stage can include the work of naming and overcoming barriers to coalition functioning and structure design. Know that this is a natural part of group dynamics and getting to a place of higher functioning.

Norming Group Development Stage

Group members establish implicit or explicit rules about how they will achieve their goal. They address the types of communication that will or will not help with the task. Indicators include questioning performance, reviewing and clarifying objectives, changing and confirming roles, opening risky issues, assertiveness, listening, testing new ground, and identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Working with Internal Teams Examples	Working with Guiding Coalitions Examples
In this phase of the process, the group begins to create norms that will help in smoothly addressing the work. This may involve new work for newly-created inside government teams or may involve revisiting and updating these communications and other norms as internal early childhood team members change.	The norming process is critical with early learning guiding coalitions, such as state early learning advisory councils or other bodies. As these guiding coalitions establish group approaches to essential communication and organizational functions, including clarity about purpose and roles, the opportunity to engage in the most meaningful work begins to emerge.

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Performing Group Development Stage

Groups reach a conclusion and implement the solution to their issue. Indicators include creativity, initiative, flexibility, open relationships, pride, concern for people, learning, confidence, high morale, and success.

Working with Internal Teams Examples	Working with Guiding Coalitions Examples
At this phase, the internal group is working hard and focusing on achieving its objectives. During this process, an early childhood group may have its best success if it continues to position and promote a learning perspective for accomplishing the work.	During the performing stage, external early childhood groups are mixing a focus on the outcome or solution with ongoing processes that embrace learning, flexibility, and openness.

Adjourning Group Development Stage

As the group project ends, the group disbands in the adjournment phase. Coalitions or teams do not necessarily move or progress in a straight line through developmental stages. They often cycle through several different stages multiple times. Teams can stagnate at a stage for a while and then move quickly through the next. As long as leaders recognize these stages of development, they are able to respond appropriately to help the group remain focused on its goals and move forward toward the performing stage.

Working with Internal Teams Examples	Working with Guiding Coalitions Examples
For internal teams, while a specific project-oriented team may adjourn, with the reality of the relatively small staffing within most governmental early childhood teams, the participants are likely to keep working together. Therefore, taking care to celebrate accomplishments before moving on will support the next phase of internal team work.	For guiding coalitions, having the opportunity to “check” the box and celebrate an accomplishment can be useful in the overall and often ongoing work with guiding coalitions. With so much work to be done, guiding coalitions may change focus and may reconstitute themselves.

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Decision-Making

Decision-making is a thought process that results in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternative possibilities. Every decision-making process produces a final choice that may or may not prompt action. Ultimately, decision-making is the process of identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision-makers. There may not always be a “correct” decision among choices with the information available. Nonetheless, decision-making is about selecting the best logical choice from the available options.

Effective communication eases the implementation of critical decisions. The more participants in a decision-making process understand their roles and expectations, the more effective they can be at helping with and carrying out the decision. In the decision-making process, consider all the alternatives and weigh the positives and negatives of each option. Attempt to forecast the outcome of each option and determine what outcome is best for that particular situation. While most public decisions are made and communicated in a very deliberate and measured way, some decisions (individual or community) are less consciously made based on intuition, prior experience in the environment, available information, emotions, assumptions, and biases that may not exist at a conscious level.

Effective Public Decision-Making

Effective public decision-making requires attention to group process, transparency, and ethical considerations. When faced with significant decisions, leaders often convene a diverse group of advisors who represent many perspectives and information sources. The group is likely to include a variety of stakeholders including regulators, funders, trustees, various staff, and consumers. The group must acknowledge competing commitments within the group. In public decision-making, where the results may become material for media stories, remembering ethical issues such as confidentiality and conflicts of interest is especially important.

Decision-Making Styles and Approaches

Members of public decision-making groups must master conflicting obligations, competing values, complexity, and social responsibility. There is often no easy or right or wrong answer. As the collaborative leader of the group, the state leader helps the group decide the most effective decision-making style given the circumstances. Outlining the various roles of the group in the decision-making process and helping members understand their responsibilities for decision results will help them determine the most appropriate decision-making style for the situation. The tables below provide an overview of different decision-making styles and information about advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.

Decision-Making Approaches

Democratic Approach

The leader gives up ownership, and the group votes.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Allows each individual in the group to participate▪ May distribute power and lead to greater synergy▪ Can yield a fast decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ May limit individual or group responsibility▪ Less efficient▪ May yield “group think” (noncritical analysis and assessment)

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Autocratic Approach

The leader controls and makes decisions.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Can yield a fast decision▪ Leader is responsible▪ Greater efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ May have negative effects on morale▪ May not lead to appropriate buy-in, which might impair commitment and execution▪ May ignore valuable ideas and insights

Consultative Approach

The leader invites participation but makes decisions.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leader is responsible▪ Group is involved▪ May lead to more positive morale▪ May lead to greater synergy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ May take more process time▪ May not lead to buy-in from group members, who must commit and implement decisions▪ Less efficient

Consensus Approach

The leader gives up control, and the group must buy-in.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Group is responsible▪ Group commitment▪ May provide for equal power between group members and leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Less efficient▪ Complete involvement▪ May yield “group think” (noncritical analysis and assessment)

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Steps in a Decision-Making Process

Although there are many approaches or variations to the decision-making process, regardless of which approach the leader takes, the process itself includes the following steps:

1. Define the issue or problem to be solved. Is the matter urgent, important, or both? If complex, break it into workable pieces. Establish criteria for success or evaluation.
2. Gather all the data and facts and understand causes. Identify different or competing interests related to the issue or explanations for the root of the problem.
3. Develop alternative possible options and solutions.
4. Evaluate alternative solutions. Consider and compare the pros and cons of each option.
5. Select the best option. The selection will be based on agreed upon criteria for success and processes (in other words, majority vote or consensus). Consider various analysis methods such as risk analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and force field analysis, as well as various values and ethical considerations. Avoid “group think” in an effort to reduce conflict.
6. Develop an action or implementation plan with tasks, dates, and responsibilities. Explain your decision to those involved and affected; follow up to ensure proper and effective implementation.
7. Evaluate the process and outcomes.

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Conflict Resolution

In any partnership or systems change effort, conflict will occur at some point in the endeavor. CCDF Administrators may want to be aware of their role in facilitating and managing conflict when it happens and be prepared to have a conflict resolution plan as one of their tools for effective communication.

Conflict resolution refers to methods and processes involved in facilitating a successful resolution. Conflict occurs when at least two interdependent parties or factions reflect real or perceived incompatible goals, scarce rewards or resources, and interference from the other party or faction in achieving goals. It involves both feelings and facts. At its root, conflict is about differences and arises with disagreement about information, processes or methods, goals, or values. A wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and creative peace-building. Conflict can have positive results, such as improved decision-making and products.

Sometimes, you may find it helpful to define what kind of conflict is occurring. Conflict occurs at different levels, each with increasing difficulty in their resolution:

1. **Facts or data:** this occurs when differing information exists. This is the simplest conflict to resolve by filling in the missing information that caused the misunderstanding.
2. **Processes or methods:** this occurs when individuals or groups disagree on how to proceed.
3. **Goals or purpose:** this occurs when there is disagreement on a direction for the group.
4. **Values:** this conflict is the most difficult to mitigate and is often based on cultural assumptions or basic meaning. Sometimes, conflict at this level is addressed by “agreeing to disagree,” respecting the differences, and learning to trust the good intentions of the other.

A classic model for framing conflict is to look at one’s style of responding to conflict and the styles represented in the group. Based on two variables, assertiveness (regard or concern for oneself) or cooperation (regard or concern for others), theorists Ralph Kilmann and Kenneth Thomas identified five conflict response styles:

- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Compromise
- Competition
- Collaboration²⁷

An individual may tend to use one style more readily than others. Depending on the circumstances of the conflict, any of these responses may be appropriate. Each yields different results. Avoidance and accommodation provide ways to appease aggression or postpone conflict, buying time. Competition may be appropriate at times but offers a “win-lose” solution. Compromise and collaboration offer approaches for “win-win” solutions but require negotiation and lengthy, candid conversation to define issues.

Should the conflict be drawn out, you may consider it wise to bring in an outside facilitator or mediator to guide any conversation leading to resolution. Sometimes, conflicts must just be managed rather than resolved, and participants learn to live with and respect the differences.

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Resources

SCARF Resources

[“SCARF: A Brain-Based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others”](#) (David Rock, 2008).

This article examines threat and reward from a social neuroscience perspective.

[“SCARF Model: Influencing Others with Dr. David Rock”](#) (David Rock, 2010).

This video introduces viewers to the SCARF model.

[“SCARF Self Assessment”](#) (Neuro Leadership Group, n.d.).

A free self assessment that helps the user understand how each domain of the SCARF model influences his or her life.

Bias Resources

[“Bias Isn’t Just a Police Problem, It’s a Preschool Problem”](#) (Cory Turner, 2016).

An NPR report shares information on a new study out of Yale that found that prekindergarten teachers, white and black alike, spend more time watching black boys expecting trouble.

[“When Whites Just Don’t Get It”](#) (Nicholas Kristof, 2014).

Nicholas Kristof examines the status of race discrimination in modern America.

[“Breaking Bias Updated: The SEEDS Model”](#) (Matthew Lieberman, David Rock, Heidi Grant Halvorson, and Christine Cox, 2015).

This article explains the SEEDS Model of cognitive bias and offers examples and solutions for mitigating bias in organizations.

[The State of Science: Implicit Bias Review](#) (Cheryl Staats, Kelly Capatosto, Lena Tenney, and Sarah Mamo, 2017).

This resource reviews scientific research on bias that was published in 2016.

Change Management

[Diffusion of Innovations](#) (5th ed.) (Everett M. Rogers, 2003).

An influential classic about how innovations take hold and become institutionalized. This [resource](#) contains open-source material.

[“8-Step Process”](#) (John Kotter, 2015).

This is a practical guide for leading and managing change and was created by a prominent thought leader.

[“Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Understanding the Stages of Team Formation”](#) (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.).

Bruce Tuckman’s model describes the stages of becoming a team—transitioning from a group of strangers to a united group with common goals.

[Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change \(3rd ed.\)](#) (William Bridges, and Susan Bridges, 2009).

This is a practical guide for understanding and managing the change process that was created by a prominent thought leader. Several open-source materials are available on the [William Bridges Associates website](#).

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